

**ABSTRACT**

The invention comprises a process of preparing a non-conductive substrate for subsequent metalization. The process replaces the traditional chromic acid etching step with an etching solution comprising a permanganate and a mineral acid. The process also  
5 includes a novel activation solution comprising a palladium salt and an amine complexor. The new process of the invention is more environmentally friendly than the traditional chromic acid etching solutions but achieves a comparable result on most non-conductive substrates.